

**LIVE CATTLE TRANSPORT SHIP — PEARL OF PARA**

*Statement by Minister for Agriculture and Food*

**HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Agriculture and Food)** [3.05 pm]: I wish to update the house on progress with the livestock ship *Pearl of Para*, which returned to Perth on Tuesday, 10 September, a week ago, six days into its voyage to Israel. The ship, which has been at anchor off Garden Island, is holding 5 240 Western Australian Brahman-cross cattle from the Gascoyne and Pilbara region. The shipment is by exporter Alan Schmidt of A. H. and R. Schmidt Pty Ltd and the vessel is holding 87 per cent of its livestock capacity.

A propeller shaft coupling was failing about a day and a half into the voyage. The crew recognised the problem and shut down the motor. Although it still had a fully functioning engine, the journey would have been slower and rations could have been stretched. The decision was therefore made to return to Perth to fix the problem. I am assured that the mechanical breakdown is having no impact on the livestock support systems. The welfare of the cattle has been of the highest priority and there have been no mortalities. The cattle have been inspected by both the federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the state Department of Agriculture and Food WA, and no animal welfare issues or breaches of the Animal Welfare Act 2002 have been detected.

DAFF has a full manifest, and an Australian-registered veterinarian is on board and reports to DAFF onshore two to three times a day. There are also two stockmen on board and a crew of 30, who have stayed on board the entire time. The average weight of the cattle is between 280 and 300 kilograms. The preferred option from both the animal welfare and biosecurity point of view is for the cattle to remain on the boat while repairs are carried out and supplies replenished. The RSPCA is likely to inspect the cattle tomorrow, subject to operational requirements and time.

The propeller shaft coupling had to be specially manufactured. The part has been taken to the vessel this afternoon to be fitted by two engineers. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority and DAFF are monitoring the progress of the repairs. The exporter expects the repairs to be completed today and, if cleared for voyage, the vessel can restock provisions and depart Australia tomorrow night or early Thursday for Israel. It is important to note that the vessel is fully compliant with Australian maritime regulatory standards. It holds a full-term Australian Certificate for the Carriage of Livestock issued by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, the body that controls the standard of vessels licensed to carry Australian livestock.